

**Testimony of  
Jack L. Johnson, Jr.  
To the  
Committee on House Administration  
United States House of Representatives  
On the  
Emergency Preparedness of the House and the  
Evacuation of May 11, 2005**

Chairman Ney and distinguished members of the Committee on House Administration, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address your committee today on this extremely important topic.

The events of Wednesday, May 11, 2005, clearly demonstrate the atmosphere that law enforcement, first responder, and emergency preparedness officials operate in following the events of September 11, 2001. In this instance, an errant plane, piloted by individuals who had quite simply "lost their way", and did not realize the ramifications of their wayward travel, caused a chain of events that resulted in the evacuation of the Capitol and other key structures in the restricted flight area. Although the pilot's activity has since been determined to be a benign threat, the actions of the law enforcement and emergency preparedness officials in this case demonstrate in the clearest sense their ability to respond to these types of situations. I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to specifically commend the actions of the U.S. Capitol Police, under the command of Chief Terry Gainer, for their professionalism and decisiveness under these circumstances. I have been in the law enforcement, intelligence and security field for over thirty years; many of those years right here in the metropolitan Washington area, and have seen first hand the transition and professionalization of the Capitol Police. I can think of no other law enforcement organization that has so revolutionized its personnel and mission to meet the challenges that they face every day. This transition, although already underway prior to the events of 9/11, has taken on a greater sense of urgency for this organization since that time, and in many respects, it has now set the standard that other law enforcement organizations seek to emulate. Quite simply – they get it.

The role of an Emergency Management Architecture in this type of scenario, to evacuate the Capitol area and if necessary, ensure the continuity of our nation's legislative process, is truly daunting. It is not one that can be approached in a haphazard and unorganized manner, but instead must be a proactive and orchestrated process that interacts with over 4500 members of

Congress and their staffs, with individual evacuation plans. This process also necessarily involves other key components such as the U.S. Capitol Police, the Sergeant at Arms, Office of Administration, Office of Emergency Preparedness and the Architect of the Capitol. Together, all of these entities have made great strides to ensure that the necessary elements of a comprehensive evacuation plan have been formulated and implemented for all of the respective stakeholders. Despite this remarkable progress, there are, in my opinion, but a few more pieces of this "evacuation mosaic" if you will, to add before it is truly a comprehensive and enterprise program that is able to meet all of the needs of this esteemed body.

My first recommendation is that there is one over-arching organization that is responsible for the evacuation program at the Capitol. My understanding is that currently this function is a collective responsibility of several entities. My experience is that whenever this type of critical function is shared, particularly by several components; there is always the possibility of differences in priorities, miscommunication, and problems with the proverbial "hand-off" during a crisis. My suggestion is that one organization be named as the responsible authority for this program, with the other components serving as an executive board to provide assistance and input. This enterprise organization should have the ability to leverage resources and technology and the authority to institute policies and best practices to all of the stakeholders. Additionally, this organization would also mandate minimum requirements for all evacuation plans, to include critical areas such as building exit locations, evacuation routes, assembly and rally points, emergency coordinators, and training requirements. There must also be a requirement to conduct regular, unannounced evacuation drills to familiarize employees and identify any impediments.

Second, it is incumbent upon this overarching authority that it view the evacuation plans in a collective fashion. Once you have ensured that the individual evacuation plans have been implemented and tested, it is imperative that a consolidated and comprehensive testing methodology be instituted. The philosophy of this organization must be that it "prepare for the worst, and hope for the best." It must be assumed that when the next evacuation occurs, both houses of Congress will be in session, it will be peak tourism time in Washington, and that significant delegations with a variety of physical challenges will be visiting their representatives. Fortunately, there have been significant advances in the simulation and modeling technology associated with evacuation planning that can be of tremendous assistance in this regard. This technology, coupled with a risk management methodology, is capable of projecting virtually limitless types of evacuation scenarios, and validating both individual and enterprise evacuation plans.

As I have indicated, all of the components involved in the evacuation planning process at the Capitol should be lauded for their efforts and accomplishments. As evidenced by this hearing, the Members of Congress themselves, and in particular this committee, should also be commended for the critical importance that they place on this issue. All too often, emergency preparedness planning, and the ensuing law enforcement responses are minimized due to their being viewed as inconvenient and intrusive. It is refreshing to see that this is not the case at the United States Capitol. The attention that this body places on this matter goes a long way to instilling public trust and the American people should feel reassured that the critical issue of the potential continuity of our nation's legislative process is receiving the appropriate scrutiny.

This concludes my opening statement. I look forward to answering any questions.